VILA RECÔNCAVO

[Town Life]

443 upper part of town also sells cloth. Most stores also have small supplies of chocolate (considered a great treat at a party), tea, honey, canned desserts such as guava, and canned butter and cheese. As a rule fresh vegetables are not sold in the stores but peddled through the streets, since few people eat them. It is more practical to order them specially from someone going to the fair in Centro. Nearly everyone has a banana tree or an orange tree in the back yard, so that few fruits are sold in the stores. The other seasonal crops, such as cashew nuts, corn, and pineapples, are peddled from house to house. As a rule people in Vila Recôncavo buy their food in small quantities, since they have no methods of food preservation. A liter bottle is carried to the store to be filled with oil or kerosene; a small can is carried there to be filled with rice, beans, or farina. The smoked meat called charque is bought by the kilo and left hanging in the kitchen, and strips are cut from it at meal times. Although the price of charque is as high as that of fresh meat, and at times higher, people say it is more satisfying. As a rule the butcher in Vila Recôncavo kills two steers a week, on Wednesday and Saturday. The meat is carried through the streets unwrapped, hanging from a cord. It is not unusual to see a string of dogs following such a person. The meat is eaten the same day to prevent spoilage, and as a result it is usually tough and flavorless.

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463 Most of the people included in Group 1 lead an upper-class
*565 kind of life; indeed to a great extent these people are the town's highest class, as will be shown in the next chapter. These are the people who do little or no labor themselves other than the white-collar work with which they earn their living. The men dress in city clothes most of the time--white shirt, tie, and suit coat--and the women are always neatly dressed with shoes and silk stockings. (The oil workers are an exception, for they do not hold white-collar jobs but wear overalls and helmets). There is always help to do the housework and the marketing. Sometimes a cook is employed; otherwise the lady of the house does her own cooking, assisted by her daughters. The laundry is sent out, or else the laundress comes to the house to do it, and water for drinking purposes and for washing is brought to the house by a man or woman employed for the purpose; members of the household never fetch water at the wells. Often the house has a cement tank and drains on the roof to catch rainwater. Nor does any member of the house fetch firewood, which is supplied by a hired person.

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VILA RECÔNCAVO

[Town Life]

743 so there is competent medical assistance. Those who are too poor to pay receive free aid and medications, milk, and soup; those who can pay do so, paying only the wholesale prices of the articles. The institute is well equipped, with an x-ray machine, diathermy, and other heat appliances, which are popular because of the prevalence of colds and rheumatism.

743 529 [546] 743 873 The institute also operates the weekly motion picture which has been a great boon to the town, a recreation room, centrally located in the town, which has a radio, billiard tables, and a bar selling milk shakes, sandwiches, beer, and soft drinks. This place has become the major meeting place for the men and boys of the town. In addition to this, the institute also runs a night school for adults.

463 [571] [462] Group 2, as listed at the beginning of this chapter, consists mainly of the people who work for those in Group 1 and who are attached to them by the bonds of the patronship to some extent, as well as by salary. The majority of persons in this category are women, engaged in the traditional female pursuits of washing, ironing, sewing, embroidering, and general housework.

296 462 463 [482] As a rule the laundry is washed at one of the town wells, which are encased in cement. The women carry the dirty clothes, a bucket, and wooden basin, all piled on top of their heads, to the well. They pull up enough water in their buckets to fill the basins in which the clothes are washed. After a soaking and scrubbing with soap the wet, soapy clothes are spread out on the ground in the sun, and from time to time water is sprinkled on them to aid the sun in bleaching. Then the clothes are rewashed and spread out to dry. Depending upon the weather, the washing and drying process may take from a whole day to three or four days before the clothes are considered clean enough. Then they are taken home to be [463] ironed. The older pattern demanded that a different person do [178] the ironing, but today this pattern is breaking down and frequently the same person washes and irons. The irons used are the old-fashioned kind heated by charcoal, which is placed inside and ignited. The irons are made with drafts to keep the fire going, and the women must stop frequently to fan the fire or renew the charcoal. Often a busy woman has two irons going and sets one aside to heat while she irons with the other.

462 252 463 Many women also prepare xangó, a small sardinelike fish caught in great quantities by the fishermen of Vila Recônca-